

YUFOS

YORKSHIRE UFO SOCIETY

PROJECT RED BOOK

(Vol 5, # 3, September 2001)



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Subscriptions:

£12:00 - 12 issues (1 year)

£7:00 - 6 issues (6 months)

sample issue - £1:50

Project Red Book is published each month by the Yorkshire UFO Society.

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They-Who-Printeth-The-Issues- Slater Publications 2001

Cover Illustration- Dave Baker

Treasurer- Jacqui Baker

Group Mascot- Lil' Matthew

Message of the month:

Contributions: Dave Baker, Jon Downes, Eileen Fletcher, Andy Roberts, Clas Svahn

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"It's the trees, Ash! The trees are... alive!"

AN INTERVIEW WITH JON DOWNES

(PART TWO)

The Centre for Fortean Zoology, Exeter

Jonathan Downes was born in Portsmouth in 1959, and spent much of his childhood in Hong Kong where, surrounded by age-old Chinese superstitions and a dazzlingly diverse range of exotic wildlife, he soon became infected with the twin passions for exotic zoology and the paranormal which were to define his adult life. He spent some years as a nurse for the mentally handicapped but began writing professionally in the late 1980s. He has now written thirteen books. He is also a musician and songwriter who has made a number of critically acclaimed but commercially unsuccessful albums.



In 1992 he founded The Centre for Fortean Zoology, with the aim of coordinating research into mystery animals, bizarre and aberrant animal behaviour and his own particular love of zooform phenomena (paranormal entities which only appear to be animals!)

He has searched for Lake Monsters at Loch Ness, pursued sea serpents and birdmen in Cornwall, chased big cats across westcountry moorland, and most recently went to Latin America in search of the grotesque vampiric Chupacabra.

He lists his other hobbies as Tequila, radical politics, the music of Scott Walker, books and more books. He is Leo with Scorpio Rising and believes that Harpo Marx is the funniest man to have ever lived. He is divorced and lives in Exeter with George the python, and a two toed amphiuma.

DAVE BAKER: Many readers of PRB will be familiar with John Keel's 'Mothman', but tell us about the UK's very own version, the so-called Owlman...

JON DOWNES: In April 1976, Tony Shiels, known to many as 'Doc' and sometimes as 'The Wizard of the Western World' wrote a letter:

"A very weird thing happened over the Easter weekend. A holiday-maker from Preston, Lancs., told me about something his two young daughters had seen

... a big, feathered bird-man hovering over the church tower at Mawnan (a village near the mouth of the Helford River). The girls (June 12, and Vicky, daughters of Mr Don Melling), were so scared that the family cut their holiday short and went back three days early. This really is a fantastic thing, and I am sure the man wasn't just making it up because he'd been told I was on a monster hunt. I couldn't get the kids to talk about it (in fact, their father wouldn't even let me try), but he gave me a sketch of the thing drawn by June.

"There have been no reports, so far as I know, of anybody else seeing the Bird-Man ... even if it turned out to be just a fancy dress hang-glider, you'd think someone else would have spotted him ... but Mawnan is not a place for hang-gliding! I really don't know what to think ... it's as if a whole load of weirdness has been let loose in the Falmouth area since last autumn!"

Although, if you read any of the books on general mystery animals such as *Alien Animals* by Janet and Colin Bord, or indeed any of the contemporary copies of *Fortean Times* the claim that Cornwall had been particularly weird at the time is often made, it is not until you visit the Cornish Studies Library in the back streets of Redruth, sit yourself down at one of their microfiche machines, and physically examine twelve months or more's issues of *The Falmouth Packet*, *The West Briton* and *The Western Morning News* that you can see quite how strange the time actually was. For a period between the late autumn of 1975 and the early spring of 1977 it seems that Southern Cornwall was seized by a period of collective madness. Much of this is chronicled in some depth in my book *The Owlman and Others* but even there I think that I failed to

give a true picture of quite how strange the area had become.

There were dramatic extremes in the weather - droughts and floods - heatwaves and frozen wastes. The local animal life went (figuratively and literally) crazy; one unfortunate woman was imprisoned in her house by hordes of attacking birds which literally beat themselves to death against the walls of her house, which was dripping red with their blood.

Another woman was similarly imprisoned by a mob of feral cats, dog attacks trebled, swimmers were attacked by dolphins (who also saved other swimmers from drowning), and there were reports that cattle belonging to local farmers had developed the power of teleportation.

Most interesting to the forteen were the burgeoning numbers of UFO sightings and the reports of three entirely different sets of mystery animal in the region; Morgawr (the Cornish Sea Serpent), the Cornish mystery big cats and the Owlman of Mawnan.

The first reports of these 'creatures' in print were in an obscure booklet entitled *Morgawr - the monster of Falmouth Bay* by Anthony Mawnan-Peller. (This is a pseudonym - but not for Tony Shiels). He gave a brief description of the events of Easter Saturday:

"During the Easter weekend, the two young daughters of a holidaymaker ... Mr. Don Melling, from Preston, Lancashire ... saw a 'huge great thing with feathers, like a big man with flapping wings', hovering over the church tower at Mawnan (on 'Morgawr's Mile'). The girls ... Vicky, 9, and June, 12 ... were so frightened that the family holiday was cut short by three days".

Although not widely read outside Cornwall, this booklet was available extensively throughout the county and was read by many people including two young girls of fourteen, Sally Chapman and Barbara Perry, who in early July 1976 were camping in the woods by Mawnan Old Church when they, too, saw the Owlman.

They met Tony on Grebe Beach, below Mawnan Old Church the day after their sighting. Sally, who was from Plymouth, had been staying with her friend Barbara, (who would only admit that she lived 'quite near the river'). Sally approached Tony and said: "Are you Doc Shiels? We've seen the bird monster."

Sally described what they had seen: "It was like a big owl with pointed ears, as big as a man. The eyes were red and glowing. At first, I thought that it was someone dressed up, playing a joke, trying to scare us. I laughed at it, we both did, then it went up in the air and we both screamed. When it went up you could see its feet were like pincers."

Her friend added some details of her own: "It's true. It was horrible, a nasty owl-face with big ears and big red eyes. It was covered in grey feathers. The claws on its feet were black. It just flew up and disappeared in the trees".

Although as Tony admitted at the time, it is possible that the two young ladies were trying to hoax him, he is convinced that they were genuine.

He separated the two girls and had each of them draw a picture of what she had seen. The two pictures are dissimilar enough to rebuff suggestions of collusion but have enough points in common, both with each other, and with the other accounts of the 'creature' to be considered as a significant piece of evidence.

Both girls made brief additional notes underneath their pictures. Sally's read: "I saw this monster bird last night. It stood like a man and then it flew up through the trees. It is as big as a man. Its eyes are red and shine brightly".

And Barbara wrote: "Birdman monster. seen on third of July, quite late at night but not quite dark. Red Eyes. Black Mouth. It was very big with great big wings and black claws. Feathers grey."

The two girls agreed on most points with their pictures although Sally thought Barbara had 'done the wings wrong'. At the same time as Sally and Barbara were talking to 'Doc' on Grebe Beach, two other girls also saw what Tony refers to as 'his Owliness':

"It has red slanting eyes and a very large mouth. The feathers are silvery grey and so are his body and legs, the feet are like a big, black, crab's claws. We were frightened at the time. It was so strange, like something out of a horror film. After the thing went up, there were crackling sounds in the tree-tops for ages. Our mother thinks we made it all up just because we read about these things, but that is not true. we really saw the bird-man, though it could have been someone playing a trick in a very

good costume and make up. But how could it rise up like that? If we imagined it, then we both imagined it at the same time".

Two years later, a young lady called 'Miss Opie' saw 'A monster, like a devil, flying up through the trees near old Mawnan Church'. A few days later Tony Shiels wrote to Janet and Colin Bord of the Fortean Picture Library: "The owlman is certainly back in business, it seems. I poked around his area, around Old Mawnan Church, a couple of days ago, and the atmosphere was positively crackling with 'odd presences', if you know what I mean.

As soon as anything really exciting happens, I'll let you know. It would be terrific if I really could get a picture of our feathered friend, but, he only seems to pop up for young girls ... and I ain't one!"

The Owlman, as it was now generally known, (it appears that Tony coined the name in late 1976), was seen again on the 2nd August by three young, unnamed French girls. The landlady of the boarding house in which they had been staying told Tony that the three girls had been frightened by something "very big, like a big, furry bird with a gaping mouth and round eyes" This was all that the landlady could tell him, so Tony left a message for the girls to contact him, but as always seems to be the case he never heard anything further.

Many commentators on the case have questioned Tony's role in the affair. One investigator, Mark Chorvinsky of *Strange* magazine even claimed that because so many of the sightings were connected with him, that Tony had made the whole thing up. Such people do not understand the reticence of the Cornish people. They do not like to talk to outsiders, and I am convinced that if it had not been for Tony's presence in the area as a trusted 'local' the affair would never have been made public. The case of the French girls for example. Tony wrote to me in 1995 explaining how he had become involved: "The French girls were students (at Camborne Tech - now known as Cornwall College), lodging in Redruth. I think they were on some sort of 'summer school' course. Their landlady 'phoned me about this sighting. Remember, at the time, I was getting quite a lot of media coverage. People reported weird shit to me"...

Two years later the creature re-appeared when, "an enormous, bird-like creature" was seen flying "over the Helford River and into the trees near Grebe Beach".

At Hallowe'en 1986 Tony was at the centre of a media storm when the Bishop of Truro, and the local newspapers accused him of having committed unspeakable acts of blasphemy inside Mawnan Old Church whilst attempting to invoke the Owlman. The affair was somewhat of a 'five minute wonder' in the press and the actual sequence of events remains obscure. Ten years or so later Tony told me: "I did a few bits and pieces inside the Church ... There was a lot of misreporting that I was throwing out challenges to God, and saying I'd smack him in the gob. I don't think God has a gob, and I wouldn't do that anyway to the deity. He'd give me a harder smack back wouldn't he?"

Eventually - more by luck than by judgement - I pieced together the true story.

He had indeed visited the church with a local radio team, but the "huge crowd of people" turned out to be ONE rather shy bloke called 'Dave'. He told me that there was no blasphemy, no swearing, no naked witches and no cigars, and that the wizard had entered the church, muttered a few things under his breath in a foreign language and then left again. It turns out that the radio team had approached my friend and asked him what he had planned to do to celebrate Hallowe'en. He said: "Buy me a drink and I'll show you."

This the radio people did, only to find that like many wizards, my friend has a legendary capacity for the stuff. Finding at the end of the evening that they had nothing to show for their severely depleted expense accounts, I have a sneaking suspicion that someone decided that it would be a good idea to concoct a bizarre tale of blasphemy and psychic mayhem.

In 1989 a young man called 'Gavin' and his girlfriend 'Sally' (not their real names), encountered the Mawnan Owlman. This was perhaps the most important sighting to date from a cryptoinvestigative point of view, because it is the only sighting that cannot in any way be linked to Tony 'Doc' Shiels. I have interviewed 'Gavin' on a number of occasions and am convinced of his veracity. This is his story in his own words:

"We had a torch and I was shining its beam across trunks about fifteen feet off the ground. I am fairly sure that the animal was standing in a large conifer tree and the illustration we made after the sighting (but not til we got home actually) does depict the animal in a conifer tree, but I'm not that sure now. Here is

the actual sighting as written down in my diary:

'Every couple of hours we would walk along the fringe of the wood. This was the third time that evening and it was beginning to get dark. From a distance trees looked black but closer up the branches and trunks could be seen. We saw the animal at about 9.30 pm. It was standing on a thick branch with its wings sort of held up at the arms. I'd say that it was about five feet tall (but please read on). The legs had high ankles and the feet were large and black with two huge 'toes' on the visible side. The creature was grey with brown and the eyes definitely glowed. On seeing us its head jerked down and forwards, its wings lifted and it just jumped backwards. As it did its legs folded up. We ran away.

"We had a pretty good idea what it looked like. We didn't know what to do about it, and essentially vowed never to tell anyone. I last saw Sally about two years ago and talked about it then. She was as unkeen to share the information then as she was earlier, and I promised I wouldn't tell anyone about her involvement, but I could 'do what I liked' with my interpretation. I respect this and have never disclosed any information about her'.

To date the most recent sighting of the Mawnan Owlman, took place, allegedly, at the end of the summer of 1995 and is chronicled in a letter sent to Simon Parker, the night editor of the *Western Morning News* in Truro. It reads:

"Dear Sir, I am a student of marine biology at the Field Museum, Chicago, on the last day of a summer vacation in England. Last Sunday evening I had a most unique and frightening experience in the wooded area near the old church at Mawnan, Cornwall. I experienced what I can only describe as 'a vision from hell'. The time was fifteen minutes after nine, more or less, and I was walking along a narrow track through the trees. I was halted in my tracks when, about thirty metres ahead, I saw a monstrous man-bird 'thing'. It was the size of a man, with a ghastly face, a wide mouth, glowing eyes and pointed ears. It had huge clawed wings, and was covered in feathers of silver/grey color. (sic). The thing had long bird legs which terminated in large black claws. It saw me and arose, 'floating' towards me. I just screamed then turned and ran for my life.

"The whole experience was totally irrational and dreamlike (nightmare!). Friends tell me

that there is a tradition of a phantom 'owlman' in that district. Now I know why. I have seen the phantom myself.

"Please don't publish my real name and address. This could adversely affect my career. Now I have to rethink my 'world view' entirely. Yours, very sincerely scared... 'Eye Witness'."

We have her name and address, but we have respected her wishes and kept her anonymity. We have tried a little piece of covert investigation into this particular eyewitness but have drawn a blank whenever we tried to investigate further. I think that it would be unwise to wholeheartedly accept this account as genuine, but it is included for the sake of completion.

We are left now with what devotees of TV gameshows would no doubt call the \$64,000 question. Does the Owlman exist? And if it does what is it?

I quite understand the unwillingness of researchers like Mark Chorvinsky to accept such a bizarre tale purely on the evidence presented by such a notorious figure as 'Doc' Shiels. After all, by his own admission he is a 'charlatan' and a 'thimble rigger', and he has even told me not to "invest belief in anything" especially him! (and this is a man I count as a close and dear friend). The discovery of 'Gavin' and his succinct and believable eyewitness testimony provided an invaluable corroboration to the vast body of 'Shiels-channeled' evidence, and has persuaded even some noted sceptics that there is something to the story after all.

Graham McEwan has suggested that such 'creatures' are quasi-animate thought form manifestations created by the unconscious mind of a lonely traveller. The veteran explorer and mystic Alexandra David-Neel writing in *With Magicians and Mystics in Tibet* (1931) tells how certain Buddhist monks can create living thought forms called tulpas. She claimed that she managed to create one of her own, the image of a fat and jolly monk who was seen on at least one occasion by an independent witness. She warns, however: "Once the tulpa is endowed with enough vitality to play the part of a real being it tends to free itself from its makers control". In the case of her tulpa this happened and she described how the monk became thinner and less jolly and how slowly 'his face assumed a vaguely mocking, sly, malignant look. He

became more troublesome and bold. In short he escaped my control.'

In my more frivolous moments I wonder whether Mark Chorvinsky was sort of right after all. Maybe 'Doc' had made the whole thing up, perhaps after he had been reading John Keel's classic *The Mothman Prophecies* (about a similar apparition in West Virginia during 1967), and had decided in a spirit of genuinely surreal mischief that it was perhaps time that Cornwall had something similar to counterpoint its very own sea monster. Perhaps this very act of creation helped form a tulpa which then got out of hand. If so then I suspect that Tony was as surprised as anyone else when other people started to report sightings of the creature.

Another theory that I have adopted at various times is linked with the sex of the witnesses. With the one exception - the young man who has asked to be identified only as 'Gavin' the only people to have seen the creature have been young women. Even 'Gavin' was accompanied by a young woman at the time. Could the owlman be a sort of three dimensional, feathered poltergeist? An apparition 'invoked' by the peculiar hormonal and emotional changes which affect young women at this time?

Maybe the combination of these conditions - which as anyone who has ever shared a house with a teenage girl will know can be quite devastating, with something innate in the psychical infrastructure of the area surrounding Mawnan Old Church has a synergistic effect, producing the apparition that has become known as The Owlman of Mawnan.

As Oscar Wilde said, 'the truth is never pure and seldom simple'. Perhaps the real identity of the Owlman of Mawnan, and indeed other similar 'creatures' seen across the globe is some, all, or none of the explanations given above, or perhaps, more probably, we shall never know!

You have a couple of projects devoted to Owlman. Tell us a little about them...

I have written a serious book on the subject and made a ridiculously stupid film which has very little to do with it but has lots of gratuitous nudity. They are both available cost £12.50 each from me at the CFZ address (allow 28 days for delivery)

You are working with Nick Redfern on a series of books entitled "Weird War Tales". What can we expect to read in these books?

The *Weird War Tales Library* is an ongoing series of short books which cover wartime mysteries from Biblical Times to the present day. The first two in the series which both deal with mysteries of the second world war are now available.

WEIRD WAR TALES I: UFOs 1939-45
£7.50/\$US12

Includes:

- Top Secret wartime investigations of a mystery precursor to the Flying Saucer - the Foo Fighter, a strange, aerial interder reported in the war-torn skies of Europe and the Far East
- Accounts of strange bodies recovered from crashed aircraft of fantastic design and unknown origin that, in some cases, pre-date the events at Roswell by at least 6 years;
- Reports that seem to fall into the so-called 'Alien Abduction' category;
- Secret experiments to perfect 'death ray'-type devices.

And much, much more!

WEIRD WAR TALES II: Missing in Action and other Mysteries of WW2. Includes:

- The notorious Philadelphia Experiment of 1943 during which, it has long been alleged, the United States Navy succeeded in rendering one of its ships invisible;
- The mysterious disappearances of both Allied and Axis pilots in the vicinity of the Bermuda Triangle;
- Dark rumours concerning the secret operations of Hitler's fearsome U-Boats;

- A series of truly bizarre wartime tales and legends that prove the old adage that truth really is stranger than fiction;
- And the allegations that the Nazis constructed secret bases in the South Pole.

And much, much more!

The third and fourth volumes featuring monsters of the second world war and a short booklet on Japanese soldiers who fought the war for many years after the war was officially over will be published next year.

You have developed a theory which links fortean or paranormal events and human political and social change. Can you expand on this?

This is on the whole my biggest ongoing research project. As my work progresses I have discovered that there seems to be a bizarre correlation between fortean phenomena and the psycho social condition of the people who experience them. One of the best examples of this is indeed the chupacabra reports which seem directly linked to the outbreaks of civil and political unrest across Latin America. At present I am working on a long project trying to map other paranormal and socio cultural phenomena against a background of psycho-social and religious/political change and it is surprising the results I am getting. Even in my own county of Devonshire I am getting some surprising results.

As a zoologist, does your interest lie primarily with cryptozoology or are you interested in all things paranormal...

Both I am afraid. That is probably why neither the zoological or the fortean establishment entirely trusts me

Hairy hominids, lake monsters and out-of-place big cats are common knowledge now to the average man in the street and sightings number in their many hundreds. But what do you think about the weirder, sometimes one-off reports, such as horses with

human faces, "walking pine-cones" or giant slugs?

Christ knows. It is stuff like that that really intrigues me. My gut reaction is to say that the people who report things like this have actually encountered something that their consciousness or CNS is just totally unable to comprehend. When their psyche is confronted with something as totally far out as this they just go into system overload and report 'walking pine cones' or whatever. I guess that the truth in these cases is probably even stranger (if that's possible.)

Okay, how about a quick game of word association. What do you make of:

Hominids, such as the Yeti, Bigfoot, Almas, etc

Yeti ---- probably true -- if it is then probably an evolved descendant of *Gigantopithecus blackii*

Almas -- maybe devolved neanderthal maybe devolved Mesolithic hunter-gatherers probably latter

Bigfoot -- mostly hoax, a few genuine paranormal phenomena

Charles Fort

Cool dude

"Alien", or Out-of-Place Big Cats

For real. I've seen them twice...

"Thunderbird" sightings

We're going to Texas next year to investigate them first hand. I was looking into them a bit in Arizona a couple of years ago. I guess they are probably out of place Condors but I dunno

"Living Dinosaurs"

Nahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh
'Doc' Shields

A very good friend of mine, just don't ever get into a drinking match with him

John Keel's *The Mothman Prophecies*

A wonderful book, one of the best

Lake Monsters

Such a big subject you'll have to buy me a lot of beer to get me started on that one LOL

The Jersey Devil

Fascinating concept. The trouble is that when you look into it a lot of the 'evidence' cancels itself out

Jon, many thanks for an entertaining and fascinating interview. Hope to see you soon speaking for us at a future YUFOS event!

COLD FUSION EXPERIMENT PRODUCES MYSTERIOUS RESULTS

(Jeff Hecht 4 September 01
NewScientist.com)

A "cold fusion" experiment in California has produced tantalising results - but critics say they may not indicate that any kind of nuclear reaction has actually taken place.

Most physicists treat claims of cold fusion with derision. However, an underground of enthusiasts has continued performing experiments which, they say, demonstrate that deuterium nuclei can fuse to produce tritium and helium isotopes during the electrolysis of heavy water with palladium electrodes.

The few outsiders who have tried to repeat the experiments have failed, and claims for cold fusion have not survived peer review to appear in mainstream journals.

Now Brian Clarke of McMaster University in Ontario, Canada, has found something that is not easily explained away.

Researchers at SRI International, a private laboratory in California, carried out a cold fusion experiment - passing a current through heavy water using palladium electrodes - and claimed to see more heat produced than could be explained by the electric power used. They then sent their electrodes to Clarke for analysis. He discovered that they contained more than 1015 atoms of tritium, a heavy radioactive isotope of hydrogen.

"There's no question of the tritium being real," Clarke told *New Scientist*.

Although this is more tritium than you would expect to find in a palladium electrode, it is far less than would be needed to account for the amount of heat produced during the experiment. A spokesman for the UK Atomic Energy Authority's Culham Laboratory who has seen Clarke's analysis said the small amount of tritium "indicates it's an electrochemical effect" - that the heat is produced by the making or breaking of chemical bonds rather than the fusing of nuclei.

"I have no explanation of how the tritium was produced," Clarke told *New Scientist*.

Michael McKubre, who performed the SRI experiments, says: "I am not convinced it's a fusion process, but it's definitely a nuclear process."

Clarke also investigated similar experiments led by Yoshiaki Arata of Osaka University, Japan. Arata's team claimed to have detected an excess of helium-3 and helium-4 isotopes following the heavy water electrolysis. But Clarke's analysis revealed no excess.

THE BERWYN MOUNTAIN UFO CRASH - A BRITISH ROSWELL? (Part two)

By ANDY ROBERTS
(flyingsaucery.com)

Because of reports of lights in the sky that evening, it was initially thought that a meteorite had impacted on the Berwyns. Many people across North Wales claimed to have seen a light in the sky 'trailing sparks'. But this was seen at 8.30pm, eight minutes before the explosion, and witness descriptions indicate that it was yet another bright fireball meteor. Nonetheless in the minds of many it has become conflated with the 'explosion' to create evidence of a crash.

The explosion was heard only in the Bala area but the tremor was felt as far away as Liverpool. By 2pm on the 24th January seismologists had determined the explosion and tremor were caused by an earthquake of 4-5 on the Richter scale. It's epicentre was the Bala area at a depth of eight kilometres. To cause a reading of that magnitude, a solid object - meteorite or UFO - would have weighed several hundred tons and left a massive crater. Therefore, unless a UFO had crashed at the *exact* moment of an earth tremor, it can be safely assumed that the explosion and rumblings were the result of a purely natural process.

Following the explosion Llandrillo district nurse Pat Evans ran out into the village street. She saw no lights but the explosion and the accounts of other villagers convinced her that something had crashed on the mountains. It took her a while to get through to the police as the 'phone lines were jammed with 999 calls, but eventually she spoke to Colwyn Bay police HQ. They suggested it could have been a 'plane crash so she bundled her two young daughters into the car and set off up the mountain, intending to offer help until the emergency services arrived.

As Mrs Evans reached the point where the B4391 mountain road levels out she was puzzled by what appeared to be a large illuminated ball of light on the hillside. Unable to identify it was she drove on for a few

minutes before returning to the same spot. The light was still there so she parked and observed it for a while. A light drizzle was falling but the night was otherwise clear and Mrs Evans was able to describe the ball as 'large', and forming a 'perfect circle'. But it didn't appear to be three dimensional. In an interview she recalled, "There were no flames shooting or anything like that. It was very uniform, round in shape...it was a flat round...". As she watched in puzzlement the light changed colour several times from red to yellow to white. Smaller lights, 'fairy lights' in Mrs Evans' words, could be seen nearby. It was too far away to reach on foot and so she returned home to bed.

Many ufologists who have written about the Berwyn Incident have claimed that Mrs Evans was turned back from the mountain by soldiers and police. This is untrue and arose from a misunderstanding when she was first interviewed by ufologists. Pat Evans is furious that she has been misrepresented in this way and stated unequivocally to me in 1998 that she saw 'not a living soul' on the mountain that night. More importantly a letter from her exists, pre-dating any interview, noting that she saw no-one. This fact is significant because the misreporting of Mrs Evans' experience has lent credence to claims that a crash retrieval team was on the mountain shortly after the explosion.

Nonetheless what the nurse saw on the slopes of Cader Berwyn was still crucial to any explanation of the case and I wanted further evidence untainted by time or ufologists. For that evidence I turned to records kept by the British Geological Survey in Edinburgh. The BGS records, untouched for twenty four years, revealed that within days of the explosion a team of investigators had been sent to the Bala area. This, incidentally, is almost certainly the source of rumours of 'officials' who came to the area, stayed in local hotels and questioned villagers closely about the event. That is

exactly what the BGS field team did. A total of six interviewers came to the area and conducted door to door enquiries about the event. This is the procedure by which the BGS investigates earth tremors and earth quakes. These interviewers worked to a set questionnaire which asked questions such as "Were you at all alarmed or frightened?", and "Did you hear any creaking noises?" These and similar questions must have seemed quite odd to the locals especially when asked by a team of outsiders who just arrived from nowhere. Over two hundred witnesses were interviewed. Nurse Pat Evans was one of them.

The BGS field notes were enlightening. Most ufologists have always assumed that Pat Evans must have been on the mountain almost immediately after the explosion. They use this assumption to argue that the lights she saw surrounding the anomalous red lights she saw must have been from a pre-alerted crash retrieval team as no-one else could have got on the mountain so quickly after the 'crash'.

But the BGS records from her 1974 interview are very specific about time and say she, "left house during 'Till Death'....". I took 'Till Death' to be a reference to the popular TV sitcom 'Til Death Us Do Part and checked the TV schedules. Sure enough, 'Til Death Us Do Part had started at 9.30pm that night. 'Til Death.... was the only post-8.30pm sitcom that evening. Knowing that the Evans' left the house after 9.30pm means she would have observed the anomalous light sometime after 9.40pm, an hour later than previously thought. That hour's difference is crucial.

Meanwhile, 14 year old farmer's son Huw Thomas was also watching TV that night. At about 9.20pm he answered the door to find several policemen in the farm yard. They wanted to commandeer the farm Landrover, saying a 'plane had crashed up on the mountain. Thomas' parents were out so, with his neighbour Enoch driving, they set off up a track leading to the mountain, other police following in a car. As they neared the mountain-gate they had to waste valuable time moving a car which blocked the road. Huw Thomas recognised the car as belonging to local poachers. Once through the mountain gate several policemen spread out on foot with torches, whilst the Landrover and police car drove slowly up the track.

The time it took Huw Thomas to speak to the

police, load the landrover, drive up to the mountain and move a car from the road would place the police search team on the lower slopes of Cader Berwyn at about 9.40pm.

The BGS also interviewed one of the poachers whose car Huw Thomas had moved. This interview confirmed their time and position and states that the poachers 'carried on work for 45 minutes (after the explosion) and were almost back at the car when met party (police etc) coming up.' Huw Thomas, now a farmer in his own right, confirmed this meeting in a 1998 interview.

That the search party comprising of police and farmers met the poachers as they went up the mountain is further backed up by other BGS materials. Besides interviews the BGS records also contained an Ordnance Survey map on which important witness locations and sightings of lights were plotted. This map was a revelation. It showed the anomalous light seen by the nurse, the location of the poachers and the police search party to be *all in the same small area of hillside*. And as already noted the times given to the BGS by all three parties place them there *at the same time*.

The logic and conclusion is inescapable. Neither Huw Thomas nor the police saw the light seen by the nurse. Conversely the nurse *did* see the police, though she didn't realise it at the time. The drawing on her BGS notes clearly shows and describes 'vehicles' and 'torch lights'. This was the search party. Between them, very close to both, is the anomalous light source. Whatever she was seeing *must* have been visible to the search team and the poachers. So either the farmer and police lied about what they saw to the BGS in 1974 and myself in 1998, or it wasn't noteworthy at the time.

But what was it? Well, there is one possibility which would account for it. The BGS notes also confirmed the poachers were using powerful lamps made from car spotlamps powered by car batteries. Pat Evans recalls the weather was clear but drizzling. Lights seen in those conditions can appear to change colour and size by refraction and to 'glow'. As for the size, which she described as larger than vehicle lights, this may be a perceptual trick. Remember that Nurse Evans was looking across a dark mountainside with no visual points of reference and expecting to see a "plane crash or some other scene of

devastation." On the evidence available it is certain that the nurse saw the poachers with their lamping lights at the point they met and talked to the police.

Some ufologists claim that although bolide meteors *were* seen throughout the evening, the beams of light seen on the mountain immediately after the explosion were not astronomical in origin and were connected to the UFO crash. Several of the BGS notes refer to people seeing these beams "on the brow" of the hill, "sometimes on and sometimes off but always vertically into sky". Another witness saw one beam "processing about the vertical". These accounts were puzzling until I looked closely at the locations of the witnesses.

All the witnesses who reported seeing these 'light beams' were in the village of Llandrillo at the time. The land rises sharply to the south and to an observer in the village the "brow of the hill" is not the summit ridge of the Berwyns (actually over three miles away), but the plateau area around the 548m point. The exact area in fact where the poachers with lamps were. The BGS records note the poachers, "continued work for half an hour to forty five minutes" after the 8.38pm earth tremor, and it was early in this time period the beams were seen. Some villagers were convinced that poachers lamps couldn't be responsible for the beams, others not so sure. One witness told the BGS he had seen the poacher's lights on previous occasions and they were exactly the same as the beams seen that night.

This theory may appear to be debunking or to be twisting the facts to fit a theory. But we must use logic and probability in solving any case and the facts are that poachers with powerful lamps were in the *exact* area where the beams of light were seen. When questioned by the police the poachers claimed their lamps were not responsible, that they had kept them trained on the ground. Yet they also said they had not seen anything unusual. It's reasonable to suggest that as the poachers and their bright lamps were in the same location as the beams of light seen from Llandrillo, it was their lights people were seeing and misperceiving. Perhaps because of excitement caused by the earth tremor, perhaps because of belief in a crash of some kind.

The poachers had very good reason for not wishing to own up to causing bright beams of

light in the sky as it was reports of 'light beams' which partially led the police to believe an aircraft had crashed. However there *were* a very small number of genuinely unexplained lights seen that evening. One witness opened her curtains immediately after the tremor to see a "big bright glow in the sky over the brow of the hill". Another saw a "glow several times brighter than the sun" to the south east which "came and went". Maria Williams of Llandrillo saw this white glow at the same time as the poacher's lights. Some scientists have suggested this short-lived white glow was caused as a result of the huge tectonic stresses involved in the earth-tremor. An earthlight. But witnesses to this were few. And as it was seen at the same time as a bright meteor and the poacher's lights, it may well be yet another misperception. Indeed one witness described the 'glow' as "twinkling...like a streetlamp seen through heavy rain", just how a bright lamp would appear.

Claims by ufologists that a military presence was on the scene immediately following the 8.38pm explosion and in subsequent days also bear close examination. As we've already seen nurse Pat Evans, by her own admission, was not stopped by soldiers or police and saw no-one out on the mountain roads. She set off at 7.00am for work the following day and saw nothing unusual in the village. So how did stories of a massive police and military presence arise? To understand that we need to return again to the official records.

Following the 8.38pm earth tremor the police opened a Major Incident Log. This log shows that the police initially thought a 'plane had crashed and Fire and Ambulance services were put on stand-by. At 9.09pm the police contacted RAF Valley Mountain Rescue Team (VMRT) based at Valley on Anglesey some seventy five miles away. A three man team left Valley at 9.20pm and, arrived at Llandrillo at 00.10am. The VMRT log lists the incident as "Unidentified lights and noise on hillside" and comments, "VMRT requested to investigate lights and noise on hillside. Advance party covered relevant area with negative results. Incident produced much local excitement." The fact that VMRT only deemed it necessary to send a three man team argues strongly against the event being of any significance. On their arrival in Llandrillo the mountain rescue team consulted with local police who suggested they wait until morning before initiating a search.

At 7.00am on 24th January VMRT, together with local police, searched the mountains. They found nothing and abandoned the search at 2.15pm, possibly following official notification that the 'explosion' had been caused by an earth tremor. Neither the police or VMRT logs mention any military involvement other than the RAF Mountain Rescue Team. Farmer's son Huw Thomas was again out on the Berwyns that day, acting as guide for Ron Madison, a scientist who was working on the theory that a meteorite may have impacted. Madison and Thomas recall seeing no-one else on the mountain other than the police and VMRT. The intense media interest however led to various helicopters flying over the area throughout the week and Ron Madison used his contacts at RAF Valley to overfly the area in a plane to take a series of photographs.

But this low level of official activity wouldn't account for reports of closed and guarded roads, the military presence, or for the aircraft and twin engined 'copters seen overhead. Looking at the paper trail, none of the police, Mountain Rescue Team or British Geological Survey documents from 1974 mention this alleged military activity. In fact the only contemporary record of a military presence comes from the article in the Border Counties Advertiser which is the source of rumours of bodies being brought off the mountain. In looking for an explanation to this component of the story there are two crucial factors.

Firstly, none of the Berwyn Mountain Incident witnesses were formally interviewed by ufologists until at least twenty years after the event. And secondly there had been at least one other event in the locality which contained all those elements. On 12th February 1982 an RAF Harrier jet carrying top-secret equipment crashed on Cader Berwyn. The RAF descended on the area in force, using Gazelle and Wessex helicopters, together with Harrier and Hercules planes, in the search. The tiny village of Llandrillo was the centre for this activity and was alive with RAF trucks and personnel for several days. The crash site was sealed off and guarded until the wreckage could be removed. Additionally there was another crash of a military 'plane, also carrying top secret equipment on the same mountain in 1972, two years before the alleged UFO crash. Again the area was sealed off with a large military presence. It is almost certain that these incidents, at the same time of year

on the same mountain, were conflated with the 1974 events.

But, the believers in the crash of a genuine alien crash say, what about the military informants who came out of the woodwork in 1996 claiming intimate knowledge of and participation in the crash retrieval. Initially this strand of the story seemed promising. After all when ex-military men are speaking out surely there must be *something* in their story?

However these 'military informants' who contacted researchers Nick Redfern, Margaret Fry and Tony Dodd did so only *after* the story had been in a 1996 issue of *UFO Magazine*. They fuelled the controversy surrounding the story, offering much speculation but no verifiable fact. Redfern has recently told me that his informant's telephone number is 'dead', whilst Dodd refuses to expand on the identity or veracity of his contact. A close reading of Dodd's account throws up more questions than answers. If the military had obtained aliens, alive or dead, would they really ferry them by truck? Surely a helicopter would have been the fastest, most efficient and secret form of transport. Porton Down, the research establishment to which they were taken would hardly compromise security or contamination by opening the boxes in the presence of what were essentially the 'delivery boys'. Until these ufologists can back their claims up with some substantial proof they remain unsubstantiated anecdotes, interesting but inconsequential to the solution of the case.

These 'revelations' came also at a time when several UK ufologists were being contacted by alleged 'military sources' offering secret UFO-related information, none of which amounted to anything tangible. Researcher Kevin McClure suggested that this was a well organised hoax, basing his suppositions on the number of contacts made within a short time-span and the absolute absence of hard proof.[] APEN, the organisation which circulated pseudo-official documents following the Berwyn Incident are widely regarded by most serious ufologists to have been a hoax perpetrated by ufologists on ufologists. This sort of hoax is not new to the UFO community, the most famous of the hoaxed documents being the MJ-12 papers which fooled ufologists for over a decade.

Despite the wealth of evidence to the contrary, Jenny Randles is not convinced that the

Berwyn Incident is completely solved. She cites the alleged anomalous radiation readings and the rumour of a leukaemia cluster as possible evidence that the incident may have involved a military accident involving perhaps a radioactive missile. Yet there are problems with Jenny's interpretation. The radiation readings taken at the Moel ty Uchaf circle in 1974 were a one-off. To have any scientific relevance at all a series of geiger counter readings prior and subsequent to the 1974 event would be required. As for the alleged leukaemia cluster there is no evidence to support this. Enquiries at the records of the National Radiological Protection Board, Greenpeace, a former radiation monitor at the Trawsfynydd Nuclear Power Station and the archives of local papers did not reveal so much as a hint of a leukaemia cluster.

That's where the Berwyn case stands in 1999. There are still a few loose ends and uncertainties; the symmetry of any UFO case is rarely complete, especially when it is not properly investigated for twenty five years. But I think the account I have given is the best, dare I say it, 'explanation' for the disparate events which coalesced into the Berwyn Mountain UFO Crash. Of course, there are those who still to believe a UFO crashed and continue to insist that documents have been falsified, that witnesses have been misquoted and so on. That's their prerogative and understandable in light of the complexities of the case and the power of belief in the extraterrestrial hypothesis.

My conclusions are based not on belief however but on the 'paper trail' left by police, RAF, VMRT and the BGS, and the pattern which has emerged from studying those sources is largely consistent with witness reports. So until some hard, consistent evidence is produced I think the notion that an alien spacecraft crashed in the Berwyn mountains is redundant.

It's hard to believe that a concatenation of prolific meteor activity, an earth tremor and poaching activity could lead to the conclusion that a UFO had crashed. It did, and sometimes - often - the truth about a UFO case is far stranger than any fiction. Although I've been investigating mysteries for twenty years every case teaches something new or reinforces some basic principle. The Berwyn Mountain case taught me (again!) never to trust material originated by ufologists, but to always go back

to source documents and witnesses, and try to reconcile the two. It also taught me (again!) about the flaws of perception and of the care needed in interpreting witness statements. However certain a witness may seem memory often combines disparate events and speculation into a convincing reality.

The indefatigable researcher and inspiration behind *Fortean Times* magazine, Charles Fort, had much to say about the connections - or non-connections - between earth tremors and meteorites. And it may be that there are other, deeper factors at work in the Berwyn Incident. Perhaps earth tremors and bolide meteors are in some way connected by mechanisms at present outside our understanding. Or perhaps extraterrestrials have learned how to enter Earth's atmosphere under cover of meteor showers, even *disguised* as meteors. The adventurous believer may even wish to accept that aliens may even have prescience of earth tremors and be able to effect a landing at exactly the same time. In lieu of hard facts the speculative possibilities are as endless as they are futile. On the other hand it could all be a gigantic cosmic coincidence, a tangle of belief and wishful thinking from which ufologists have spun yet another saga in the continuing extraterrestrial mythos.

NEXT MEETING

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APOLLO AND FOX TV: THE DECEPTION OF THE CENTURY

By Clas Svahn (UFO-Sweden)

"The deception of the century", it was called when Sweden's Channel 5 on April fools day this year showed the programme *Conspiracy Theory: Did we land on the Moon?* But in spite of the date the programme was no joke. Millions of Americans and many Swedes now believe that the Moon landings were just one big bluff.

The programme was shown in the form of a documentary but it more looked like a personal attack against NASA from American conspiracy maker Bill Kaysing and British photographer David Percy. Behind the showing of the programme was Fox TV, the same company who in 1995 showed the very dubious Alien Autopsy Film, now widely regarded a hoax.

In the programme, Kaysing and Percy accused the American space organisation NASA of setting up the scenes from the Moon in a studio in the Nevada desert, purported to be Area 51. No Apollo ship or astronaut landed on the Moon but circled around the Earth a week or more before landing in the Pacific Ocean, according to the conspiracy makers.

But it was not NASA who lied but Fox and Channel 5 who gave their viewers only one side of the story.

Basically, Kaysing and Percy are given the opportunity to present their accusations in the simplest manner. In contrast the few answers from NASA representatives that made it to the finished programme, were complicated and difficult for the viewers to understand.

Although dealing with the Moon landings only one astronaut took part in the programme, Brian O'Leary, who doubted that NASA really landed an astronaut on the Moon. "I cannot say with one hundred percent certainty that they went to the Moon", he says.

What was not in the programme is that O'Leary left NASA in 1968 after only one year training without flying a single mission in space. Neither mentioned were the fact that O'Leary for a number of years has been on the new age circuit.

What the 750,000 people who were involved in the Apollo programme and the 12 astronauts who really landed on the Moon, thought about the claims, was not shown.

Conspiracy Theory - Did we land on the Moon? was produced by Bruce Nash and broadcast in the US on the 15th February 2001. When Fox TV showed the film in the US, it issued a warning text at the beginning: "The following programme contains controversial material. The theory expressed is not the only possible explanation. Viewers are invited to draw their own conclusions based on the presented information".

The warning text shows that it was not made as a documentary film, but as a one sided version where the 79 year old Bill Kaysing, who once worked as head of technical information at Rocketdyne Research Department in Santa Susana, between 1956-1963, before going public with his bizarre theory. "There is no possibility that NASA landed a man on the Moon", says Kaysing in the programme and refers to a study from 50 years ago, which at the time showed that the chances of doing so were as low as 0.0017 per cent. That these figures had changed dramatically after the first successful launches were never mentioned.

Let us look closer the "facts" shown as proof for the claim that the Moon landings were a bluff.

1. No stars are shown in the pictures from the Moon.

The films and photographs on the Moon were made in very bright sunlight and earthlight and the camera shutters were adjusted to expose the astronauts and the Moon's surface. The Ektachrome 64 film used is not sensitive for small light sources as the stars and it would have required several seconds exposure to get them on film. You could test this by a simple experiment: Go out in the street on a dark and clear night and ask a friend dressed in white to stand beneath a street lamp. Take a picture of him and try to get some stars on the same exposure. No luck? Well, the astronauts had the same problem.

2. The American flag moves even though there is no wind on the Moon.

In all the scenes shown in the film, one sees an astronaut twist and pull on the flag before it moves. In no instance does the flag move solely by itself without an astronaut touching it. An object, which is made to swing, continues to do so in vacuum as in air. If a wind had blown one would also have seen the fine Moon dust fly around in the same scene, which we do not do.

3. There is no crater after the Lunar Module (LEM).

The powerful break of the motor is carried out many hundreds of metres high and during the final stage of the landing, changes to a very light downwards force. In vacuum the blow from the motor spreads rapidly. The motor also shuts down two metres above the surface. The landing place was carefully picked; the ground was firm with a minimum of minute dust on the surface. NASA would not risk the Lunar Module sinking down in deep layers of dust. That the dust layer is so small is also shown by the fact that the astronauts were not sinking down into the deep layers.

4. Why is there no noise heard from the engine during the landing?

The motor were sitting in another part of the Lunar Module than the astronauts and since the sound from it did not have any air to transfer through it was not heard in the part where the astronauts were standing. The microphones which did pick up sound, were mounted inside the astronauts' helmets, isolated from the surrounding area. There were no external microphones in the LEM.

5. How come footprints are seen around the landing area when the starter motor would have covered them by dust?

See point 3. The minute dust disturbed would have been cast far away from the area of the footprints since there is no air to prevent movement of the dust. Very little dust could have fallen near the Lunar Module.

6. The dust should have fallen down on the feet of the Lunar Module but none is seen.

As one finds no air on the Moon, the dust fell quickly back down to the ground and landed before the Lunar Modules feet had reached the ground (see point 5).

7. There is no visible flame from the LEM's exhaust when it lifts off from the Moon.

The Lunar Module's fuel contains hydrazine and dinitrogen tetroxide, which ignites when mixed and then produces a transparent flame which is not seen by naked eye.

8. NASA astronauts circled around the Earth for 8 days before they were brought back down. They never landed on the Moon.

If the Apollo ship had circled around the Earth instead of continuing on towards the Moon, this would have been detected by the thousands of amateur radio buffs who listened in to the conversations between Apollo and ground control in Houston. Also, the Russians would have picked up any signal coming from a rocket in orbit instead of being on its way to the Moon. They would surely have told the world about it.

These are some of the claims made in the programme. After investigating the conspiracy makers claims, one wonders how anyone could believe them.

One of the other claims is that since all of the photos from the Moon are perfect and show the astronauts perfectly exposed and always in full figure (never any heads missing as one would have expected since the cameras were mounted in a fixed position on the astronaut), all must have been photographed in a studio. This is so absurd, that I myself am certain that Bill Kaysing has not bothered to check the most elementary facts regarding other claims as well.

During the time that I visited NASA's photo archives at The Lunar and Planetary Institute in Houston last summer, I could browse through piles of badly taken photos; badly exposed, many with half of the astronauts

missing and others with lens flares and other artifacts made by the Sun. Surely Bill Kaysing could have made the same trip. That so many photos were good, was because of the astronauts' professionalism and training before the journey to the Moon. And of course, these were the pictures printed in magazines, books and newspapers after the landing. The bad ones are still in the archives for everyone to see but never made it to print.

Despite it being possible to check most of these "facts", millions of Americans are prepared to believe what is being said in the TV-show. According to the programme, 20 per cent of the Americans feel we did not set foot on the Moon (in the translated Swedish subtitles the figure is 25 per cent). The real figure from a Gallup-poll from 1999 is 6 per cent, but this figure is not mentioned in the show.

Also in the programme is a reference to the science fiction classic *Capricorn One* from 1978. The film is about how NASA faked a Mars landing scene in the same way as Kaysing and Percy claims NASA made the Moon landings. In the TV-show the fact that the Apollo scenery is strikingly like the scenery in *Capricorn One* is taken as proof that it was all a bluff - a remarkable way of using facts. *Capricorn One* was made five years after the last Moon landing and the director used the original Apollo photos to make the film as accurate as possible.

David Percy, who is a photographer, is also in the programme. He infers that the still photos from the Moon are faked. This is his "proof":

9. The shadows from the Moon pictures are not falling in the same direction in some of the pictures. This shows that NASA used many lights in a studio.

That the shadows from different objects do not fall in exactly the same direction is completely natural and applies to pictures taken on Earth as well. How they fall is due to how the ground sits and on the fact that two-dimensional pictures are trying to reproduce a three dimensional landscape. If one used many lights, as Percy states, the objects on the ground would cast multiple shadows. There are no such pictures from the Moon. Certainly the light from Earth also casts shadows on the Moon but the Sun's considerably brighter light drowns this.

10. How come one can see details of the astronauts' clothes on the Moon where they find themselves in shadow and with their backs towards the light?

For three simple reasons.

1/ The Sun's light is very bright since no atmosphere obstructs the light. Much brighter than on Earth.

2/ The Earth also shines on the Moon (during all Apollo missions the Earth was above the Moon's horizon, calculated for communication reasons), and put extra light on the astronauts.

3/ The Sun and Earth reflects light very effectively on the lighted Moon's surface. Look at the full Moon one evening and see how bright the reflection of the Sun's light shines on Earth even though being 385,000 kilometers away. This light is spread through ground reflection also to areas in shadow. The same effect is established when one looks at an object in shadow here on Earth.

11. How come many details are shown also in shadow areas?

There are many different light sources, which can light up the object in shadow (Earth, Sun, the bright Moon dust, see point 10). The Earth is such a powerful source that shines 68 times brighter on the Moon's surface, than the full Moon does on the Earth. The Moon dust also reflects light in different places as sand on a beach does on Earth.

12. There is the same background on many photos which shows that the same scenes were used.

In the programme, two photos from Apollo 15 are shown. According to the show, the pictures should show the exact same area - but one with the Lunar Module and one without. Something that is not possible other than the pictures being altered or taken in a studio. But if one looks more carefully at the pictures, it exposes the TV bluff. Since I have had access to both of the still pictures it is easy to see that the background is somewhat dislocated horizontally in the two pictures which shows that the pictures are taken with some 20 metres between. This has made the foreground change radically but the background just slightly. This movement also made the Lunar Module to go

out of the view-finder and "disappear" from the picture. You could easily duplicate this effect here on Earth.

13. In two sequences from Apollo 16, which are said to show different places on different days, the background shows that they are taken in the same place.

The clips that is shown in the TV film are without question taken at the same place. According to the editor of Lunar Surface Journal, Eric Jones, the pictures are taken within 3 minutes between. A labeling error during editing did make the scenes seemingly to be taken on different days. Which they are not.

14. Why does the cameras hair crosses on some occasions disappear behind objects in the picture?

NASA's Hasselblad cameras had many fine hair crosses in it, which are seen on the pictures from the Moon. One picture from Apollo 11, shows clearly how one part of the equipment conceals the hair cross. One Apollo 12 photo shows how the flag and the astronaut cover two crosses. According to space expert James Oberg, this is due to the crosses being concealed when a white bright overexposed object "eats out" the crosses in the film.

If you want to see an example of this please go to Ian W. Goddard's home page (see source) or to my own Swedish version of this article published on www.dn.se/moon.

15. If one shows the pictures from the Moon at double speed, it shows the astronauts moving at the same speed as they would on Earth.

But the dust which is cast up from the Rover's wheels, falls in a parallel track and not as dust spreads when in the air. This argument really shows that the films were shot on the Moon in vacuum conditions and not the opposite.

16. The Van Allen belt would have killed the astronauts as they passed through.

Certainly it would have been life threatening to spend a long time in the Van Allen belt but the Apollo astronauts passed through the belt in an hour, which was completely harmless. The life-threatening dose is around 300 rem, the astronauts received a total of 2 rem.

The moon conspiracy programme has been constructed so that without the specialists knowledge needed the viewer cannot investigate and judge the truth of the claims. The programme is deceitful and made not for information but for disinformation. I am sorry to say that Fox TV and Channel 5 exploited this in full.

Clas Svahn, UFO-Sweden

Sources:

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Phil Plait's *Bad Astronomy*
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EDITOR's note: Thanks also to Eileen Fletcher for her help in producing this article for PRB.

We hope - in the interest of fairness - that we can publish a rebuttal to Clas's article by David Percy in next month's issue

FROM AROUND THE WORLD...AND BEYOND!!!

UFOs, conspiracies, forteen and paranormal events compiled by Dave Baker

INVESTIGATORS STUMPED BY CATTLE MUTILATIONS

(Las Vegas Sun, August 07, 2001)

Investigators in north-central Montana are baffled by a string of cattle mutilations since mid-June, prompting one agency to seek help from a Las Vegas group that studies unconventional theories, including UFOs.

Ranchers in Dupuyer and Fort Shaw have reported four cattle deaths in which portions of the animals' faces were cut or peeled off and eyeballs and genitals were removed.

The animals had not been shot, and investigators say whoever is responsible left few clues behind.

The killings are similar to a string of cattle deaths in the 1970s in the same general area, in which more than 60 cattle in five counties were found mutilated. Those cases remain unsolved, and prompted speculation at the time from some that the deaths were the work of aliens or satanic cults.

Dan Campbell, a deputy with the Pondera County Sheriff's Department, believes humans are responsible, but their motives remain unclear.

"I don't believe in little green men," he said. "I think 500 people have asked me, 'Well, what's doing it?' If I knew, I would get it in the paper."

Colm Kelleher, deputy administrator of the National Institute for Discovery Science in Las Vegas, confirmed Tuesday that the sheriff's office contacted the institute for help.

"They'd heard about some of our previous research from a retired deputy sheriff in that area," he said.

The group describes itself as a research organization that studies a variety of unconventional scientific theories.

NIDS investigated the 1970s cattle mutilations in Montana, and Kelleher said its research found a correlation between the animal killings

and UFO sightings around Malmstrom Air Force Base.

"Just because we found a statistical linkage between UFO sightings and animal mutilation, we are not drawing a direct link," he said. "We are completely undecided as to the perpetrators of these mutilations."

'NESSIE' MAY BE DEAD

(13 Aug 2001)

A Loch Ness Monster investigator claims the creature may be dead.

Robert Rines says environmental changes may have killed off the famous monster, but he will continue to search for it.

His US Academy of Applied Sciences investigation team captured the famous image of an underwater 'flipper' at the loch in 1974.

"I couldn't tell you if Nessie is still alive," he told the *Inverness Courier*. "There is almost no vegetation in some parts of the lake. I would worry what something like a Nessie would find to live."

Dr Rines says since he first began visiting the loch in the 1970s, there have been fewer sightings and increases in pollution from a hydro-electric plant and tree planting.

He said: "Environmental stress has occurred since I came here in the 1970s. You have the hydro plant for one thing and all the forestry plantings which unfortunately were done here in such a way that streams of lime acid poured down into the loch. The environmental change hasn't been going Nessie's way."

But Dr Rines refuses to give up. "We don't want to until we have exhausted our own and our instruments' capability of telling us if there are one or more big animals in the lake. Hope springs eternal," he said.

Dr Rines is in the final days of a month-long expedition with a team that includes his son Justice and uses a new type of sonar - CHIRP - to give greater coverage.

The team has reported no new contacts, although the sonar has helped discover other items of interest, including an underwater hill and what could be the wreck of the world's first steam-powered dredger.

The president of the Official Nessie Fan Club, Gary Campbell, disagrees with Dr Rines's idea that Nessie may be dead. He says she was recently spotted off Fort Augustus.

MOTORISTS SPOT "LIONESS"

(22 August, 2001, BBC Online)

Motorists at a Somerset petrol station raised the alarm when they spotted a "big cat" in an adjoining field.

Witnesses said the animal crouching in the grass near the A38 in Churchill looked like a lioness.

Susan Todd was sitting in a car on the forecourt of the Rowberrow Service Station when she saw the creature. "It was a cream colour with a long body and a long tail," she told *BBC News Online*.

"I jumped out of the car and ran into the kiosk where my husband Ken was buying cigarettes. I told him and the staff what I had seen. They came out and saw it as well. Because we were pointing, motorists and lorry drivers also stopped to look. I rang the police as I was very concerned to protect children in the area. I saw some going round there on pushbikes."

Mrs Todd, who lives in Whitchurch, Bristol, said about 15 people had seen the animal and they were all convinced it was a big cat.

"It was stalking in the middle of the field about 500 yards away. Two men jumped over the wall and as they started to walk towards it, it stood up and ran very fast to the corner by some big trees. It had really 'muscle' back legs."

Mrs Todd, whose 22-year-old daughter Sally and granddaughter Shannon, six, were in the car at the time, said she felt shaken by the experience.

Avon and Somerset police said they had received several calls about the beast and their Yatton officer was keeping a watch in the area.

The RSPCA were also investigating the reports.

Jacky Cullinford, a Somerset-based researcher from the British Big Cats Society, said from the description she thought that the animal was likely to have been a sandy-coloured puma.

"To a member of the public this would look like a lioness. We believe most reports of lionesses are usually sightings of pumas."

They were thought to be the offspring of big cats let into the wild illegally in Devon nearly 15 years ago.

Pumas generally survived on deer and rabbit and the males often travelled many miles in a day, said Ms Cullinford.

EYES TO THE SKIES - AEGEAN AIRSPACE CHALLENGERS... FROM OUTER SPACE?

(John K. Cooley Aug. 8th, ABCNEWS.com)

Greek and Turkish air force pilots, sharing contested Aegean airspace, are used to seeing a fighter or two of their usually friendly adversary looping around them, or diving to intercept their patrol or training flights.

But for two Turkish trainee pilots, the aerobatics were different this time.

While on a routine training flight in a U.S.-made T-37 off the Turkish Aegean coastal town of Candarli, they suddenly had reason to call their home base control tower.

A bright object had approached their plane at high speed and reportedly gyrated around them for about a half hour.

The Turkish newspaper *Hurriyet* quoted their call: "Object approaching the wings. Now it's behind the plane... now it's in front of us." They told their controller and the regional war alert centre of the Turkish army that the apparent Unidentified Flying Object had an unusual shape that looked like a cross between a cone and a disc.

Turkish air force sources said they were investigating. So were the neighbouring Greeks.

The Turks were planning to report the encounter to international bodies - especially the U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

PARK LIFE!

BY DAVE BAKER

A couple of months ago, YUFOS were invited to hold a display / stand/ stall at this year's Sheffield Show, in the *Sheffield on Offer* Marquee. As advertised in last month's issue, this took place over the August Bank Holiday weekend, and, never a group to shun publicity or attract fresh victims - <ahem> members, we gathered together a merry band of YUFOS volunteers, and in the grand tradition of Cliff Richard, Una Stubbs and Melvyn Hayes, we decided, "Come on everyone! Let's put on a show!"

Okay, "show" might be a bit of a stretch, but we did pack a couple of display boards with information about YUFOS, local UFO sightings and UFOs in general, and amassed a number of UFO videos we could run constantly on twin portable TVs to give us a degree of hi-tech attractiveness.

And so, hideously early on the morning of Sunday 26th August, when all right-thinking people were sleeping off Saturday night's hangovers, we set off for Graves park and the surprises and adventures that awaited us!

All we knew was that the *Sheffield on Offer* marquee would be devoted to various clubs and societies from Sheffield -and what a bizarre and eclectic mix it was. As Richard Moss, our web-master and resident 'boffin'¹ said; "If this is an example of all that Sheffield has to offer, I'm glad I live in Rotherham."

It wasn't that there was anything *wrong* with any of the clubs who had been granted a spot; it was just that there wasn't very many of them. Opposite us were representatives of some sort of mediaeval society showing people how to swing swords about with tin helmets on. A motherly female member of theirs, decked out for all the world like Mrs. Miggins from *Blackadder*, wandered across at one point to look at our display.

"I could do you a talk on mediaeval UFOs." Richard offered charmingly.

"No you couldn't!" She snapped, and buggered off. Charming. Must be all that mead.

¹ Copyrighted by ALL newspapers for scientist or someone else who wears glasses and is clever.

There was also a man trying to interest people into blowing into his tuba, a painter, a *Sheffield Star* booth selling...well, copies of the *Sheffield Star*, and a photography club. In the far corner was the Sheffield Astronomical Society, members of whom I have contacted before for research purposes and it was a pleasure to finally meet them. Over the two days we became good mates, and our groups promised to liaise as often as possible. Which drives a nail into the idea that UFO groups and astronomy groups can't stand one another...

Our spot was positioned between a martial arts school and -believe it or not- the Northern Hamster Society, and as the days wore on, we would find that the big, tough blokes dressed in white dojo robes got all the attractive female visitors, and the bloody hamsters got all the rest. Never have we seen such fiery enthusiasm directed at something so fuzzy and so...asleep. We actually *saw* people heading towards us with excited interest gleaming in their eyes, before catching sight of small, furry, big-cheeked rodents, and veering off like they had been offered a choice between Anne Widdecome in a thong and Sarah Michelle Geller with a pint of lager. The general feeling in YUFOS was that we could have had a large notice saying "Good Fortune, The Meaning of Life and Free Sex here", and people would have gone, "OOO!... Oh, hang on a minute - Hamsters!"

And so, after much struggling and fighting to set up the display boards - borrowed quite gratefully from the Platon family, we arranged back issues of *Project Red Book*, set up the TVs and video, and awaited the best examples of members of the public that Sheffield and it's surrounding environs has to offer.

Never before has there been amassed such a wide array of society, from glorious visions of stunning beauty, to twisted, shambling mockeries of perverse humanity - and that was just us.

We certainly were kept busy though, particularly on the Monday, and -whether it indicated a deep interest in UFOs or just something to pass the time, hundreds of people took the time to peruse the stand, pick up a leaflet, or use us as a stopping point before heading for the hamsters.

Many people merely browsed, either too shy to talk or quite content to read the interesting and informative displays², or watched the constant run of *SIGHTINGS* clips running on the video. Often though, people did stop, and questioned us about crop circles, alien abductions or reported their own UFO sightings. Some of these people agreed to fill in YUFOS report forms, others merely gave us anecdotal evidence, but there were many interesting cases worth mentioning here. The problem was that many of these were along the lines of "...something that happened years ago, and I've always wondered about it.", and consequently had little hard facts about them, such as dates and times.

Some of those reports are presented here. As many of them have not been investigated fully, or even at all, I include them without comment- make your own judgements on the validity of them as UFOs, IFOs or even if they ever happened at all...

NORTH SEA

A group of North Sea oil-rig workers in the 1970s watched dozens of balls of light passing at a high altitude overhead. The men had been watching a film - *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, and our witness had stepped outside for a cigarette while the projectionist changed reels. Looking up at the brilliantly clear night sky, he had seen points of white light moving in the heavens.

"It was like watching a busy cross-roads at night." He told us. "I grabbed a pair of binoculars and watched them for a few seconds."

He was joined by some of his colleagues, who took it in turns to watch the unusual display through the binoculars. After a couple of minutes, they drifted back inside, lured the re-starting movie.

The witness returned the next few nights at the same time, but never saw anything like this "crossroads" again.

* * *

HEMSWORTH, SHEFFIELD

In early 1997, at about 10:00 pm, Ms. J was sitting in her living room facing the bay

window, when she caught sight of something alarming in the night sky. The 'UFO' was "huge," a dark, sharply defined, metallic object with numerous different coloured flashing lights around it's rim. It was circular, with a dome on top, "made a sound like a helicopter", and moved on a zig-zagging path, it's speed changing from "extremely fast", to hovering. At one point, as it came closest, it seemed low enough to touch the roof of the house.

The witness watched the object with her daughter until it vanished from sight.

* * *

Unidentified and untraceable- but possibly American - helicopters and aeroplanes which constantly fly over a witnesses' house, scaring him. No airports or RAF bases nearby.

* * *

A bizarre UFO witnessed years ago by a couple of young boys, which later one witness was able to positively identify as the AWAC...

* * *

A member of a ham radio club told us of a strange UFO he witnessed on the Snake Pass a couple of years ago. It had a central light, and other bright lights which blared suddenly into life and revolved to shine down at the road. Strangely, another member of the club, who was a radar operator at Fylingdales - mentioned to him that at around the same time as the UFO sighting, Fylingdales had been put on orange alert...

* * *

There were others, some of which I will report on in the next issue of *Project Red Book*, in which you can read the second part of our adventures...

THRILL!!! To the hypnotic lure of the Beer Tent of Doom!

SHUDDER!!! At the Porta-loos of Hell!!!

SHRIEK!!! At the cans of coke for 80 bloody pence!!!!

In the next exciting ish!!!

² I wrote them.